



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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**POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE LETTER: ASSESSMENT FOR ADULT EDUCATION
STUDENTS [PPGL-0603]**

Introduction:

Local adult education programs must assess students using standardized pre- and post-assessments to report educational gains for the National Reporting System (NRS). To promote the quality of these assessment data, the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) at the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), U.S. Department of Education (DOE) requires each state to submit annually a written assessment policy. The policy is to describe the assessments local programs may use, when local programs are to administer pre- and post-tests, training requirements associated with assessments, their administration, and reporting requirements. State implementation of effective assessment policy will result in high quality assessment data from local programs.

The purpose of the state assessment policy is to provide guidance to programs relative to their assessment responsibilities in meeting state and federal accountability requirements. This policy does not address other types of classroom- or program-based assessments. Programs are encouraged to continue to use multiple ways to assess progress and achievement and use this information to inform teaching and provide learners with feedback. In addition, each funded provider must have a local written assessment policy and procedures document that adheres to the state policy, and includes:

- description of assessments the local program may use;
- when the local program administers pre- and post-tests; and
- training requirements associated with approved assessments, their administration, and reporting requirements.

The local assessment policy shall be shared with staff and participants and take into account the provider's instructional delivery system, the intensity and duration of instruction, and the student population served.

Assessment is used for both accountability purposes and to inform instruction. NRS requirements for assessment emphasize the need for valid and reliable assessments for measuring achievement of literacy and language skills for adult students, tied to NRS levels. The use of valid and reliable instruments ensure what is intended to be measured, is measured (i.e., literacy, language, mathematics, etc.) and consistently measured each time an assessment is administered.

Programs also use assessments for instructional purposes in determining at what level of instruction the student shall begin and what skills and proficiencies must be achieved. Using standardized tests provides uniformity in determining entry levels and progress.

General Guidelines:

According to Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, P.L. 105-220, adults who are eligible for adult education services:

- ❖ are 16 years of age or older;
- ❖ are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law;
- ❖ lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society;
- ❖ do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- ❖ are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

Testing Requirements:

Pre- assessments

- Participants shall be pre- and post-tested with an approved assessment (see list below). At least 50% of participants [those who have completed at least 12 hours of instruction] must have a pre- and post-test during Fiscal Year 2006 and 60% must do so in Fiscal Year 2007.
- To determine the appropriate assessment to administer, adult educators should talk with participants during the intake process about educational and career goals.
- Pre-testing shall be done before instruction begins but after completion of intake and orientation.
- Pre-test dates and participation start dates shall be within a month from each other.
- While the NRS requires students receive 12 hours of instruction before they may be reported as enrolled, it is important to capture all student enrollments, including those students who have received less than 12 hours. The participant is officially enrolled upon the completion of intake and orientation, an approved assessment, and meets with eligibility requirements. (See above.)

Post-assessments

- Progress (interim) and post-tests should be routine components of a program's instructional process.
- Programs shall test participants at least once after the pre-test within a given program year. Depending on instructional intensity (i.e., 15 hours per week for 20 weeks or 4 hours per week for 50 weeks), programs are encouraged to test participants more often and according to publisher's guidelines.
- The same assessment instrument should be used for pre-testing and post-testing, using alternate forms for each.
- If more than one assessment is administered to a participant, the latest assessment determines educational functioning level at completion or advancement.
- If, due to extenuating circumstances, no follow-up assessment of the participant is conducted during the program year, the participant must be counted as remaining in the same educational level as upon entry and cannot be reported as advancing to a higher functioning level.

- An “advance” or “completion” of one or more Educational Functioning Level (EFL) is recorded if, according to a subsequent assessment, the participant has entry level skills corresponding to one or more levels *higher* than the incoming level in the areas initially used for placement.

Test administration

- Programs shall follow appropriate test administration policies, procedures, and practices, as published by developers of the approved tests.
- Assessment instruments shall be administered in a proctored environment and in accordance with publishers’ and Office of Adult Education, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) assessment guidelines.
- Programs must make accommodations for adults with disabilities who request them and must do so following test developer guidelines. Programs should keep good records on their requests for testing accommodations.
- Assessment results should be shared with learners as soon as possible after the assessment is completed.
- Programs may share test results with instructors to inform curricula and instruction, but must maintain confidentiality in other instances, i.e., counselors. Test scores may be shared in the aggregate, but no personal identifying information can be revealed; nor may results be reported in cells smaller than six (6) observations to protect individual’s privacy.
- Programs will be required, as of July 1, 2006, to report the number of participants’ pre- and post-tested using NRS Table 4b.
- Programs must put in place strict information security and confidentiality guidelines to ensure test security and protect student information.

Training

Assessment data should inform program decision-making and program improvement decisions. Program service providers will be trained on the assessment policy, how it should inform curricula and instruction, and collection of quality data for the NRS. New program staff will be expected to receive training on the assessment and goal setting policies as well as intake and orientation processes within three weeks of hire. Assessment-specific training will be expected at its first availability. Programs shall keep records of which staff attended training and who conducted the training.

Assignment to Educational Functioning Levels:

Programs must assign participants to the appropriate educational functioning level based on test scores. The lowest score and/or the score that correlates with the learner’s primary goal must be used to determine this level. Find below a link to the NRS Functional Level table and corresponding standardized tests scores.

NRS educational functioning levels:

<http://www.nrsonline.org/reference/index.html?chapter=2§ion=1&topic=1&subtopic=0>

Approved Assessments:

In Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007, programs can use one of the NRS-approved assessments listed below. Programs must use approved standardized assessments for placement of participants into educational functioning levels and to measure and report progress. All students that will be included in the state's NRS data submission must be tested. Exceptions may be made for students who are unable to understand or respond to the test due to low literacy or English proficiency or due to disability. However, the programs must provide some alternative assessment for such students.

Using approved-NRS assessments uniformly statewide, allows for comparability across programs within the state, which is especially needed when funding is tied to NRS outcomes. It ensures consistency.

Both NRS and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Adult Education Office currently approve the following assessments*:

ESL	ABE/ASE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CASAS ▪ Oral BEST ▪ BEST Plus (Computer Administered or Print Based) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CASAS ▪ TABE Forms 7/8 & 9/10 ▪ ABLE Forms E & F ▪ WorkKeys (for high inter-mediate ABE and above only)

*For reporting and accountability purposes and until a more comprehensive assessment agenda has been developed and instituted, **programs are required to use the above approved tests.**

ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Examination) measures the functional abilities of adults. It tests vocabulary, silent reading comprehension, spelling, language use, and mathematics. Additional information is available at: Harcourt Educational Measurement, 1-800-211-8378.

CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) is a competency, outcome-based system for assessing adult basic reading, math, listening, writing, and speaking skills. The intended population is adults functioning at or below a high school level in attaining the basic literacy skills to function effectively on the job, in the community, and in the family. Consultation and training are required for implementation of the system. More information is available at: <http://www.casas.org>.

Best Plus (Basic English Skills Test) is a revision of the oral interview section of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which discriminates among the levels of English language proficiency described in the Student Performance Levels (SPLs). The intended population is adult English language learners who may or may not have received an education in their native language or in English, but who need to function in day-to-day life in the U.S. Conversation language skills, including speaking and listening are measured/tested. A six-hour training workshop in administering and scoring the test is required for all test administrators. Additional information is available at: <http://www.cal.org/BESTplus>.

(The *BEST* oral interview section will be retired on September 30, 2006. It will continue to be available for purchase and use through that time in order to aid current clients in their transition to *BEST Plus*.)

TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) is designed to provide achievement scores for adult education students. The content of TABE 9 and 10 stresses the integration and application of skills in contexts that are meaningful to adult examinees. The intended population is adults in

basic education and adult secondary education programs. It focuses on three types of literacy: prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy. Training is required. Additional information is available at: <http://www.ctb.com>.

WorkKeys is a job skills assessment system measuring “real world” skill that employers consider to be critical to job success. The intended population is employees and potential employees who are adults. Selection and promotion in jobs, placement in training programs that are part of a job, and formative evaluation of the examinee’s skill level is the purpose of the system. There are ten separate assessments, see descriptions at <http://www.workkeys.com>. The test administrator guides are provided for all assessments. In addition, a series of instructional guides call Targets for Instruction is available for the trainers and teachers interested in curriculum development.

Assessments Not Approved for Placement or Reassessment (not exhaustive):

- Official GED Practice Test (OPT)
- GED (General Educational Development) tests
- Short form of BEST (Basic English Skills Test) Oral
- Using alternate versions of assessment instruments for pre- and post-assessment (i.e., CASAS for pre-assessment; TABE for post-assessment)
- Using the same *form* of an assessment for both pre- and post-assessments
- Professional judgment

In an effort to assist programs with defining elements to include in their assessment policy and procedures, please find below two of the program quality indicators for Assessment of Learner Performance and Ongoing Assessment produced by one of the Governor’s Adult Literacy Task Force committees and refined by a program staffed work group.

Assessment of Learner Performance

<p>Standard: The program has a process for the assessment of student progress that is consistent with state policy and guidelines, based on an understanding of the learning process, ongoing, and purposeful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Assessment tools and procedures reflect an understanding of the complexities of language, literacy, and numeracy acquisition and use.</i> ✓ <i>Assessment tools and procedures are aligned with instructional approaches, curricula, and statewide standards.</i> ✓ <i>Assessment procedures use a variety of evaluation tools for specific purposes.</i> ✓ <i>Students are actively involved in the assessment of their own progress and develop self-assessment strategies to monitor their own performance and growth.</i> ✓ <i>Assessment results are shared with the learner and documented and reported according to state guidelines.</i> 	<p>Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of assessment procedures and tools and rational for their use • Student work samples, self-assessments and test results in student file, goal or educational plan, portfolio, etc. • Teacher and student observations and reflections in journals, etc. • Completed and dated outcome reports to funder on file
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Ongoing Assessment

Standard: Program staff and students use on-	Supporting evidence may include (but is not
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<p>going formal and informal assessment to inform teaching and learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Ongoing assessment of student progress is shared with the student</i> ✓ <i>Students evaluate and give feedback to the program</i> 	<p>limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student files, portfolios, etc. • Teacher notes, progress reports, student/teacher conference notes, etc. • Student surveys, evaluations, etc.
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